

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
SUN-TIMES

JAN 11, 1977

M - 554,334

S - 667,850

A 'Bay of Swine' scandal?

Most people have read about Central Intelligence Agency bugs and other illegalities. A story in Monday's Sun-Times gives CIA "bugging" a new twist, though:

Germ warfare — in direct violation of a vow by President Richard M. Nixon.

The story said a U.S. intelligence source confessed that he got a vial of African swine-fever virus (a disease affecting pigs only, not to be confused with swine flu) at a CIA base in Panama in 1971. Acting on orders, he reportedly then passed it along to plotters against the government of Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro.

Six weeks later, Cuba had to slaughter 500,000 hogs to halt the disease's spread. The out-

break — the only time the disease has ever struck in the Western Hemisphere — crippled Cuba's pork industry for months. It was called the "most alarming event" of 1971 by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

It will be one of the most alarming scandals of 1977, if it is true that the virus was supplied by the CIA. Sadly, it won't be that surprising, considering past stories of CIA dirty tricks against Castro.

Congressional oversight and investigation panels have ballyhooed their reforms in the last year. A swift and full probe of the swine-virus charge may prove how — indeed whether — those reforms work.